Serial robber, dentist rapist nabbed by Philippine police

PDA president calls for better security measures in dental clinics

HONG KONG, Thailand: Female dentists in the Philippines can breathe a sigh of relief, as the National Capital Region Police Office has reported that it has arrested a man who could be responsible for a series of robberies and sexual crimes targeting dental offices in the Metropolitan Manila area. Police representatives told reporters that the 52-year-old suspect was seized in early September in his home in Las Piñas City, 20 kilometres south of the capital.

The arrest is a success of estimate for the Philippine Dental Police, which has recently been cast in a poor light by reports posted on whistleblower website WikiLeaks, describing the agency as inefficient and corrupt. It also ends a manhunt lasting for months and involving intelligence operatives throughout the country, as well as the Philippine Dental Association (PDA), which it said was cooperating closely on the matter with the police.

The suspect, who spent five years in prison on robbery charges from 2004 to 2009, is accused of robbing over 20 dental offices and raping or sexually assaulting female dentists over the last 12 to 14 months. His modus operandi was to pose as a client requesting dental treatment and once having gained access to intensify his victims with a semi-automatic handgun to make them compliant.

According to the police, he has confessed to 19 of the robberies, starting in May 2010, but has denied the charges of rape and sexual assault.

Another individual suspected to be involved in some of the crimes is also in custody, the police said. PDA President Dr Roberto Tajonera, a dentist from Manila, appeared relieved, but said that better security measures need to be taken in dental clinics, such as the installation of CCTV cameras, to prevent further attacks on dentists.

Fibre–optic sensor research honoured by AP dental student body

A deitative fibre–optic Bragg–stack sensors to measure demineralisation of enamel has taken first place at this year’s scientific competition at the 38th Asia Pacific Dental Students Association’s (APDSA) annual congress in Thailand.

High–resistance fibre–optic sensors are commonly employed in a wide range of industrial applications in order to measure temperature, strains, illumination, and other physical quantities. In dentistry, they have been used to study contraction and other physical quantities. In the future, it is hoped to utilise the novel technique for the early detection of tooth decay.
Dental students in India face new regulations

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From news reports

NEW DELHI, India: The Indian Ministry of Health and Family Welfare recently approved a revision of course regulations for Bachelor of Dental Surgery (BDS) programmes, making it mandatory for dental undergraduates to participate in a paid, rotating one-year internship after four years of theoretical training. The new regulations will first be applied to students who started their BDS in 2008/2009 and be implemented in dental schools around the country in Autumn.

Internships were temporarily dropped from BDS courses in 2007 after the Dental Council of India found out that many students, especially from private schools, had tried to fake certificates instead of actually doing hands-on training. It also contributed to increased stress levels amongst dental students owing to the high number of subjects in the final year, according to a 2009 study.

Since then, BDS programmes have been five-year courses and consisted of theoretical modules only.

Revising the scheme after four years follows international standards that require mandatory internships in dental education institutions worldwide, ministry officials said in a statement. They added that it will also provide for better opportunities for practical training and skill development.

It is estimated that India currently has the largest number of dental schools in the world. However, experts say that the country is putting too many dentists on the market, making it difficult for BDS graduates to find a job.

Treatment of swallowing disorders

Daniel Zimmermann

HONG KONG: Magnetic brain stimulators could help stroke patients overcome life-threatening swallowing difficulties, Australian scientists have reported. In a clinical study conducted at the University of Adelaide (UA) in South Australia, researchers are currently investigating how the process of trans-cranial magnetic stimulation (TMS), a non-invasive electromagnetic stimulation of cerebral nerve cells, could help to regain control of mouth and throat muscles damaged by cerebrovascular accidents.

According to UA speech pathologist and lead researcher Dr Sebastian Doeltgen, swallowing disorders affect more than 50 per cent of patients suffering from the effects of a stroke. Untreated, the condition can lead to severe health conditions like silent aspiration, dehydration or even pneumonia, which can be life-threatening, especially for elderly patients. Common therapies to overcome the problem include physical exercises to improve the coordination of mouth and throat muscles.

The new therapy approach developed by Doeltgen and his team uses magnetic stimulation to create electric currents in the brain that could stimulate the nerve cells that the scientists believe control the complex process of swallowing. Similar techniques were successfully used by German researchers earlier this year to stimulate cerebral nerve cells in rats.

“When people have a stroke, the parts of their brain that control the muscles in the mouth and throat are often damaged and we have to find ways to reactivate these regions,” Doeltgen told Dental Tribune Asia Pacific. “Using TMS, we can assess to what degree different cortical motor networks are involved in swallowing motor control. This information will ultimately allow us to develop tailored swallowing rehabilitation approaches that target specific motor circuits.”

The initial results of the study, which has received governmental funding of AU$500,000 (US$515,000), are expected to be released in two to three years.